

**Sen. McKinney in opposition of SB 32**

**Public Safety and Security Meeting February 28, 2012**

Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, Senator Guglielmo, Representative Giegler and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to Senate Bill 32 which attempts to change a 1998 law that established a minimum staffing number for state police officers.

On the night of January 3, 1998 Heather Messenger was murdered by her husband while she was on the phone with 911. It took a State Police Officer over 20 minutes to finally arrive on the scene, and by that time it was too late. On that night, Troop D in Danielson only had four patrol cars on duty. The legislation creating the minimum number of police officers was passed in part because of this horrific incident.

Earlier this year, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that the minimum number of 1,248 state police officers is mandatory, not directory. That means that while minimum staffing levels have rarely been maintained by state government in the decade since the law passed, state government would be statutorily bound to uphold minimum levels moving forward. By eliminating this provision, we put our public safety at considerable risk. Trooper levels become just another line item in the state budget; and one the current administration has already threatened to cut when budget deficits arise.

When this law passed in 1998, then Senator Kevin Sullivan said, "the virtue of this legislation will live beyond the budget we hopefully will soon adopt in Connecticut because it commits us to a staged and clear program of finally moving in the right direction, not the wrong direction."

I ask the members of this committee to help keep our public safety moving in the right direction by rejecting this proposal and maintaining minimum staffing levels for state police.